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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Alaska Region
Report
Number 97

Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

Analysis of public comments
Identification of major public issues

#6073710

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

Chugach National Forest
Pouch 6606
2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

Dear Reader:

The Chugach National Forest is developing a land management plan which will direct management activities on the Forest for the next 10 years. We want to identify major public issues and concerns related to management of the Forest. The issues, once identified, will become the focus of planning and management direction.

One way to identify important issues is to ask the public. And, as many of you know, we have been doing that quite actively during the past 2 years in our "Southcentral Area Assessment" in 1977 and in our public involvement activities for the "Alaska Supplement to the Draft Environmental Statement, Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II)" in 1978. Our most recent request for comments was for the "Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan" which was sent out early in 1979.

We are grateful so many of you took the time and effort to respond. We received over 800 responses, many of which came from the lower 49 States in response to the RARE II Draft Environmental Statement, but the majority were written by Alaskans. From Ketchikan to Kotzebue, Alaskans wrote expressing their views about forest management and related issues on the Chugach National Forest.

Comments were received from Native corporations, business people, and group representatives expressing interests spanning a broad range of environmental, recreational and commodity development concerns. Elected officials, State agencies, local governments as well as many private citizens also responded and expressed their personal or administrative viewpoints.

We are very impressed with the content of the comments received. People generally offered their opinions on a variety of issues and often supported their opinions with well-thought-out reasons. We received many detailed, complex responses and reports containing valuable, site-specific management recommendations.

What did we do with the comments? We analyzed them to help identify major public issues and concerns which will be addressed in the "Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan." This report describes the results of that analysis. If you have any comments or questions concerning the contents of this report, feel free to write to Duane Lyon or Chuck Harnish at the above address or telephone 279-5541.

Sincerely,

Clay G. Beal

CLAY G. BEAL
Forest Supervisor

introduction

Identifying major public issues is a fundamental step in land management planning. Guidelines for land management planning direct that major public issues be identified and addressed in the planning process. A major public issue is defined as "...a subject or question of widespread public interest relating to management of National Forest System lands identified through public participation."

Public participation has been extensive. During the past 2 years there have been three major efforts by the Forest Service to identify important public issues. These efforts include the "Southcentral Area Assessment," and the "Alaska Supplement to the Draft Environmental Statement, Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II)." Also included is the issue analysis of the "Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan."

Early in 1977, in an attempt to verify public issues for the "Southcentral Area Assessment," we discussed a variety of issues in a brochure and asked the public to respond. Many issues were noted in the 67 letters and response forms that we received. These responses are included in this analysis.

In 1978, through public meetings and news releases, the public was informed about a Forest Service program called the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II). We received 484 responses (including personal letters, response forms, postcards, telegrams, and form letters) to the RARE II draft environmental statement. They were analyzed at the RARE II Content Analysis Center in Salt Lake City during the fall of 1978. Although those responses were solicited for RARE II considerations, we felt they would also have validity for determining other issues, so we reviewed them in much greater detail for this analysis. Responses received after the RARE II cut off date were included in this analysis.

In February 1979, we mailed out an informational brochure requesting public comment on different issues identified in previous public involvement efforts. Twenty-four meetings were held throughout Southcentral Alaska to explain the land planning process and the need for identifying issues. The intent of the brochure and public meetings was to determine which issues were most important in management of the Chugach National Forest. We received 253 responses as a result of this effort.

The 804 responses collected during the 1977-79 public involvement efforts included the views of 863 people. Some responses were signed by more than one person, a husband and wife for example. This accounts for the numerical difference between responses and respondents.

The methodology used to conduct the analysis is called Codinvolve. It is a content analysis process in which relevant information contained in a response is summarized and coded on an edge-punch card. It is a systematic process which uses a codebook and trained coders to minimize subjectivity and interpretation. Since its development in 1974, the Codinvolve process has been used on many public response analysis projects of the Forest Service and other agencies.

Codinvolve attempts to summarize the opinions people have on a particular issue as well as the reasons they offer to support their opinions. Consideration of the reasons is what takes public involvement out of the vote-counting realm and requires exercise of professional judgment. Generally, opinions and reasons are couched in pro-con terms. For example, a person may write, "I think you should provide more salmon habitat enhancement facilities in Prince William Sound, (pro opinion) because it will increase sportfishing opportunities in years to come (reason)." In addition to these types of comments, many people indicated their interest in a particular subject by merely raising it in a neutral, value-free context. For example, one may write, "Salmon habitat enhancement facilities should be considered in your planning process." Or, "Has the Forest Service decided whether to provide future salmon habitat enhancement facilities?" When compiled, these type of comments indicate emerging or established public interest in a particular issue, in this case, fisheries management.

We feel that analysis of public participation should focus on the substantive content of the information provided by the public. For this reason, we decided that two or more responses received from the same person during the same public involvement effort in 1977, 1978, or 1979, would be analyzed as one response.

A few individuals and groups, however, responded to all three public involvement efforts. We included their responses separately because we believe they reflect a genuine expression of intense interest and continual involvement which warrants individual analysis. Because so few people are in this category and different viewpoints are represented, we feel the vote-counting implications are minimal.

The Content Analysis Team was comprised of five individuals. The team leader was Robert M. Muth, Regional Social Scientist. Coders included Millie Lindall, Computer Technician; Ella Wright, Writer/Editor; Wendy Kirkpatrick, Computer Technician; and Teressa Moen, Regional Public Information Officer.

issue analysis criteria

Three major criteria were considered by the Land Management Planning Staff in making judgments concerning what constitutes a major public issue.

Geographical Distribution — The first criterion was the geographical distribution of comments that indicated widespread importance of an issue. For example, if numerous comments were received from one Kenai Peninsula community addressing a concern for greater access to sportfishing areas, perhaps the issue would best be resolved by the local Resource Management Assistant. But, if residents from several Southcentral Alaskan communities addressed this issue, it may indicate a widespread concern which would need to be resolved on a Forest-wide basis through the planning process. Consequently, the geographical distribution of people who raised a particular issue contributed to its importance.

Number of People — The second criterion used was the number of people who addressed a particular issue. The magnitude of responses regarding a specific issue generally indicates its relative importance to the public. Many comments were received regarding the importance of the issues themselves. Additional information was received regarding resolution of these issues.

As we said in the introduction, 804 responses were analyzed and they represented the views of 863 people. These responses were received from about February 1977 through April 1979. Residents of the lower 49 States (responding almost entirely to the RARE II Draft Environment Statement) constituted 40 percent of those commenting during that period. Many respondents had either visited, or lived in Alaska, or they had planned to visit Alaska in the future. The other comments were from persons living in communities throughout Alaska.

As an element of this criterion, we felt it was essential to analyze public comments by geographical region to determine whether the issues varied by geographic location. To achieve this, public comments were sorted into the geographical regions shown in table 1.

Table 1 — Number of responses received and number of respondents commenting by geographical location.

Geographical Locations	Responses*	Respondents**
1. Anchorage	159	177
This category includes all responses with an Anchorage mailing address.		
2. Cook Inlet		
This includes all communities in close proximity to Cook Inlet, except for Anchorage (above), and Hope (which is included in Kenai Peninsula). We received responses from people living in the following Cook Inlet communities:		
Eagle River	11	11
Girdwood	10	11
Palmer	8	8
Chugiak	3	3
Indian	2	2
Willow	2	2
Trapper Creek	1	1
Wasilla	1	1
Cook Inlet total	38	39
3. Kenai Peninsula		
We received responses from people living in the following Kenai Peninsula communities:		
Seward	21	21
Soldotna	18	19
Kenai	17	17
Hope	12	12
Cooper Landing	9	11
Moose Pass	7	7
Homer	6	6
Ninilchik	2	2
Sterling	2	2
Kasilof	1	1
Kenai Peninsula total	95	98
4. Prince William Sound		
We received responses from people living in the following Prince William Sound communities:		
Valdez	23	26
Cordova	18	18
Whittier	16	18
Knight Island	1	1
Tatitlek	1	1
Prince William Sound total	59	64

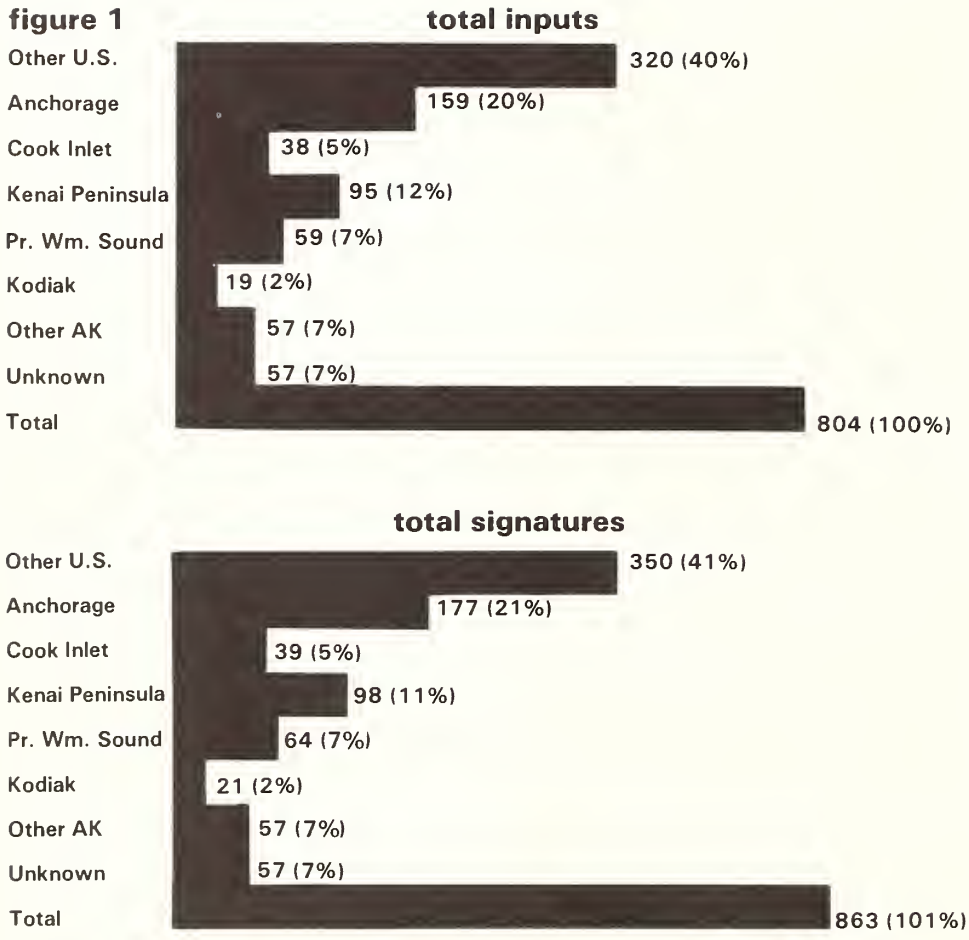
Geographical Locations (continued)	Responses*	Respondents**
5. Kodiak		
This includes responses from residents of Kodiak and Afognak Islands:		
Kodiak	18	19
Afognak	1	2
Kodiak total	19	21
6. Other Alaska		
This category includes responses from people in the following communities:		
Fairbanks	27	27
Juneau	7	7
Ketchikan	5	5
Glennallen	4	4
College	2	2
Copper Center	2	2
Aleknagik	1	1
Eagle	1	1
Kake	1	1
Kaktovik	1	1
Kotzebue	1	1
Lake Minchumina	1	1
McCarthy	1	1
North Pole	1	1
Sitka	1	1
Yakutat	1	1
Other Alaska total	57	57
7. Other Parts of the United States	320	350
This category includes all States other than Alaska.		
8. Unknown	57	57
This category is comprised of responses which did not show return addresses. Most of the responses with unknown addresses were on forms not widely distributed outside of Alaska and are most likely from Alaska residents.		
Total from all locations	804	863

* Numbers in the response column represent inputs from individuals, groups, agencies, and other respondents.

** Numbers in the respondents column indicate the number of individuals actually signing the responses.

In the following discussion, we refer only to the number of signatures, since they represent the actual number of respondents who commented. Figure 1 illustrates the comparative number of people who responded from different geographical areas.

figure 1



Formal Groups — A third criterion in deciding what constitutes a major public issue was the degree to which an issue was addressed by formal groups. These groups represent certain organized constituencies and are playing an increasingly active role in natural resource issues. Although we do not regard responses from formal groups as any more valid or of greater weight than those received from individual private citizens, we feel their responses may reflect significant public concern about particular issues.

A substantial number of responses were received from formal groups. These nongovernmental organizations include environmental groups, recreation oriented groups, commodity development groups, and professional societies. Industry associations, fisheries organizations, private businesses, large corporations, and Native groups and corporations were also placed in the formal group category.

Formal group responses from parts of the United States (other than Alaska) included Amax Exploration, Inc.; American Ski Association; Amoco Minerals Co.; Aspen Wilderness Workshop; Association of Ski Area Consultants; Atlantic Richfield Co.; Chevron U.S.A., Inc.; Colorado Wilderness Network; Crown Zellerbach; Dean Sherman Newsletter, Inc.; DEPCO, Inc.; General Crude Oil Co.; Hill Behan Lumber; Huff and Puff, Inc.; Minerals Engineering Co.; National Wildlife Federation; Outdoors Unlimited; Phillips Petroleum Co.; Society of American Foresters; U.S. Ski Association; and World of Rock Hounds Association.

Anchorage formal groups included the Alaska Center for the Environment; Alaska Oil and Gas Association; American Society of Civil Engineers; Anchorage Chapter, Audubon Society; Associated General Contractors of America, Inc. (Alaska Chapter); Charles F. Herbert, Minerals Consultant; Chugach Forest Study Group; Chugach Natives, Inc.; Forests North, LTD.; Friends of the Earth; Mountaineering Club of Alaska; National Outdoor Leadership School, Alaska Branch; Nordic Ski Club of Anchorage; Pacific Alaska LNG Association; Sierra Club, Alaska Chapter; The Organization for the Management of Alaska's

Resources, Inc.; Trustees for Alaska; U.S. Ski Association, Alaska Division; and United Lumber Co., Inc.

Far North Ski Guides was the only formal group responding from the Cook Inlet area.

Kenai Peninsula formal groups included the Alaska Loggers Association; Homer Chamber of Commerce; Kachemak Bay Conservation Society; Kenai Guide Service; Kenai Lumber Co.; and Kenai Peninsula Conservation Society.

Prince William Sound formal groups included the Alaska Wilderness Sailing Safaris; Cordova District Fisheries Union; Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation; and Prince William Sound Inn.

Kodiak formal groups included the Afognak Wilderness Lodge; Alaska Conservation Society, Kodiak-Aleutian Chapter; Koniag Native Corp.; and Sims and Associates.

Other Alaskan formal groups included the Alaska Conservation Society; Alaska Miners Association; Nerka, Inc.; and Wilderness Society.

In summary, three major considerations helped us distinguish between major public issues and issues of lesser importance. These were the number of people who addressed an issue, geographic distribution of respondents, and the number of formal groups commenting on an issue.

major public issues

Public comments addressed many specific questions, subjects, and concerns. These were consolidated into general categories.

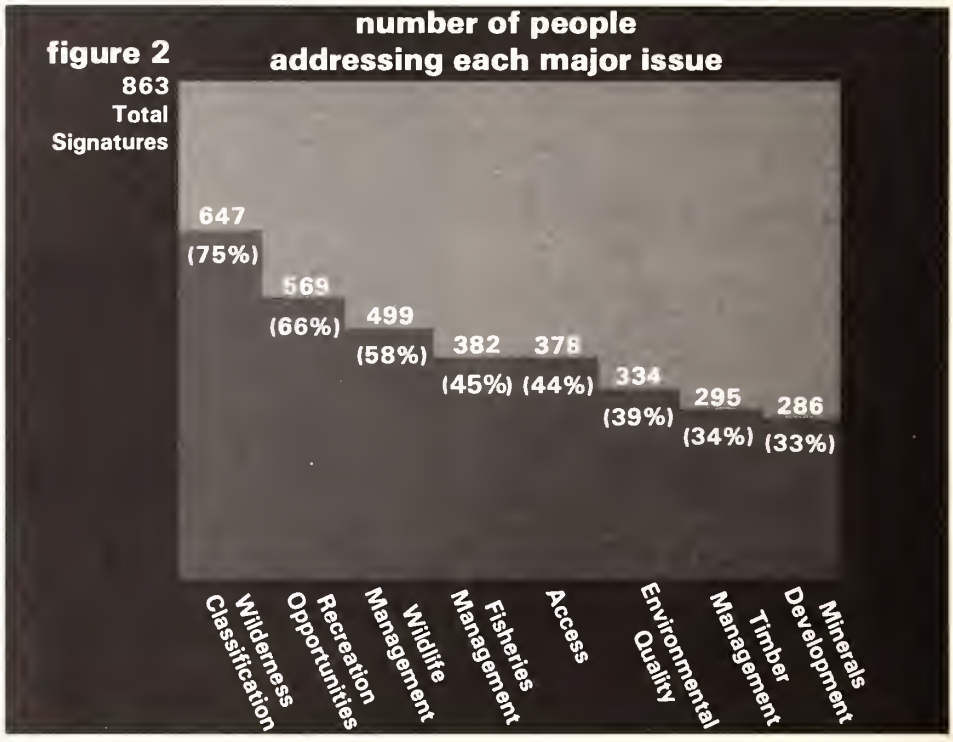
It was determined that the following issues emerged consistently enough geographically and across a broad spectrum of formal groups to suggest that they are significant public concerns. These issues warrant strong consideration in the "Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan."

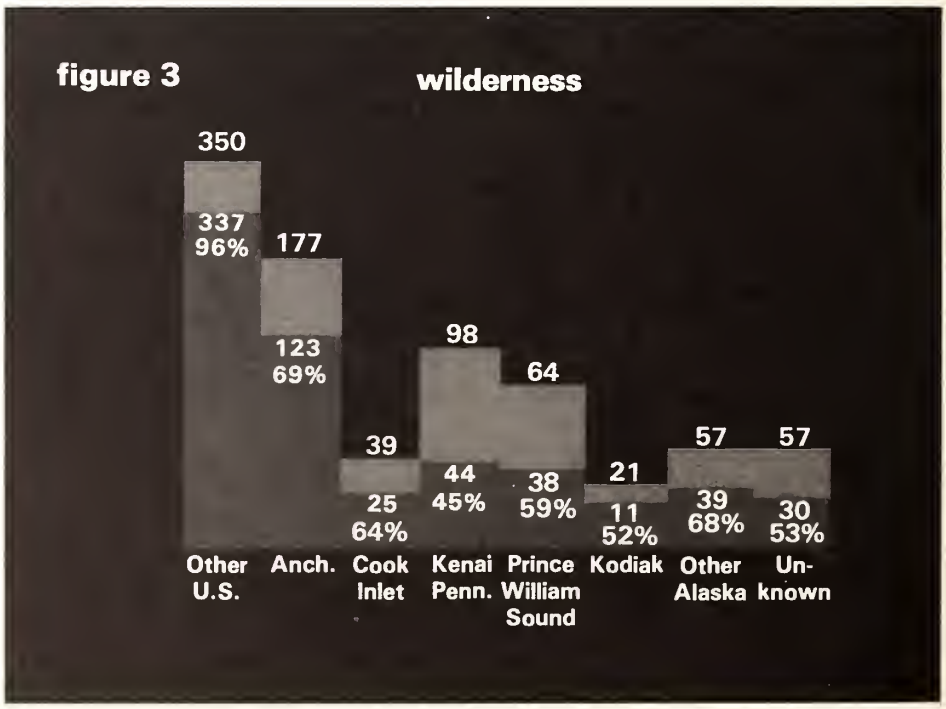
These issues include —

- Wilderness allocation and management.
- Recreational opportunities.
- Wildlife management.
- Fisheries management.
- Access.
- Environmental quality.
- Timber management.
- Minerals development.

Although public comments addressed many other, more specific issues, these eight general issues emerged as most important. They are interrelated to varying degrees, but the following analysis discusses each one separately. Figure 2 shows the frequency of comments about major issues and the number of respondents that addressed each one.

Parts of these issues may be resolved with the completion of pending "d-2" legislation in Congress (Section 17(d)2 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act) and with final conveyance of Native and State land selections. But many other issues may be left unresolved. For example, proposed legislation currently pending before both houses of Congress provides for wilderness study in certain—but not designated wilderness—on the Chugach National Forest.





Our efforts will be concentrated on finding the optimum resolution to the major public issues that have been identified. The following contains a more detailed discussion of these issues.

We believe that the "Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan" will provide an excellent opportunity to address many of these issues. Our efforts will be concentrated on finding the optimum resolution to the major public issues that have been identified. The following contains a more detailed discussion of these issues.

wilderness allocation and management

How much land on the Chugach National Forest should be formally classified as wilderness, and where should it be located? What values can best be protected through wilderness allocation? Does a unique Alaskan situation call for exceptions to current policy which would allow for building and maintaining public use cabins and shelters, developing fisheries research and management facilities, and using mechanized modes of access, such as powerboats and small aircraft for subsistence or recreational use? Is wilderness more preferable in close proximity to metropolitan areas or in remote areas less likely to be adversely affected by human use?

As figure 3 indicates, wilderness allocation and management concerns are extremely important to the people who corresponded with us over the last 2 years. Wilderness was an especially important issue to people outside Alaska. Ninety-six percent of those people who responded from the Lower 49 raised wilderness related issues or offered wilderness allocation preferences. Sixty-one percent of the Alaskan residents who commented also addressed the issue.

The magnitude of public responses regarding the wilderness issue was in large measure a function of the comments provided to us in the RARE II process. The RARE II effort was an accelerated phase of the Forest Service's land management planning process which focused on recommendations of specific roadless areas for wilderness, nonwilderness, or further planning designation.

The support offered for Alternative W was an important focal point of the wilderness related discussion contained in the public comments. Alternative W was developed in response to RARE II by the Chugach Forest Study Group, a coalition of local environmental and recreational groups. The alternative included area-by-area wilderness recommendations which the study group felt represented the best mix of wilderness and nonwilderness on the Chugach National Forest. Over a third of the respondents (121 in the other United States, 107 in the State of Alaska) commenting on the wilderness issue offered endorsement for Alternative W. The reason most often given for their support was that it would best protect the scenic, wildlife, and primitive recreational values on the Chugach National Forest.

Other public comments also expressed support for more wilderness in general and wilderness allocation for specific geographical areas. In addition to the protection of scenery, wildlife, and primitive recreational opportunities, frequently mentioned reasons for desiring wilderness allocation included the protection of wilderness values (such as ecological values and solitude), the need to preserve some wilderness for future generations, and the protection of anadromous fish habitat.

A smaller number of respondents (55) were opposed to wilderness. Twenty-one felt the nation already has enough legally classified wilderness. Reasons offered in support of nonwilderness mostly addressed the need for commodity development and unrestricted motorized access for recreation or other purposes.

Other wilderness-associated concerns identified in the analysis were:

- The need for wilderness in close proximity to Alaska's growing population centers was an important consideration to 53 respondents (17 from other States, 36 from Alaska). Many people commenting on this topic stated that wilderness near urban centers was needed to provide year-round primitive recreational experiences for city dwellers.
- The importance of providing fisheries research and management facilities within wilderness areas was mentioned by 32 people, 29 of whom were from within Alaska. They felt that protection and enhancement of the fisheries resource should not be prohibited by wilderness classification.
- Allowances for floatplane and powerboat access to and use within classified wilderness areas was supported by 16 respondents, all from within Alaska. Generally, people favored these exceptions to current legislative policy. They felt allowances should be made for the continuation of traditional subsistence uses, and to provide floatplane and powerboat access to wilderness areas. Otherwise, access would be precluded because of the lack of a highly developed road and trail transportation network.
- Responses signed by 43 people favored continuation of the Forest Service public use cabin program. Some of these respondents felt construction and maintenance of public use cabins and shelters should be provided in wilderness for public health and safety purposes.

The general issue of wilderness allocation and management is probably the most intense single issue regarding the Chugach National Forest. Passage of final d-2 legislation will resolve many of these questions and will provide legislative guidance to the Forest Service for the resolution of other issues in the "Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan."

recreational opportunities

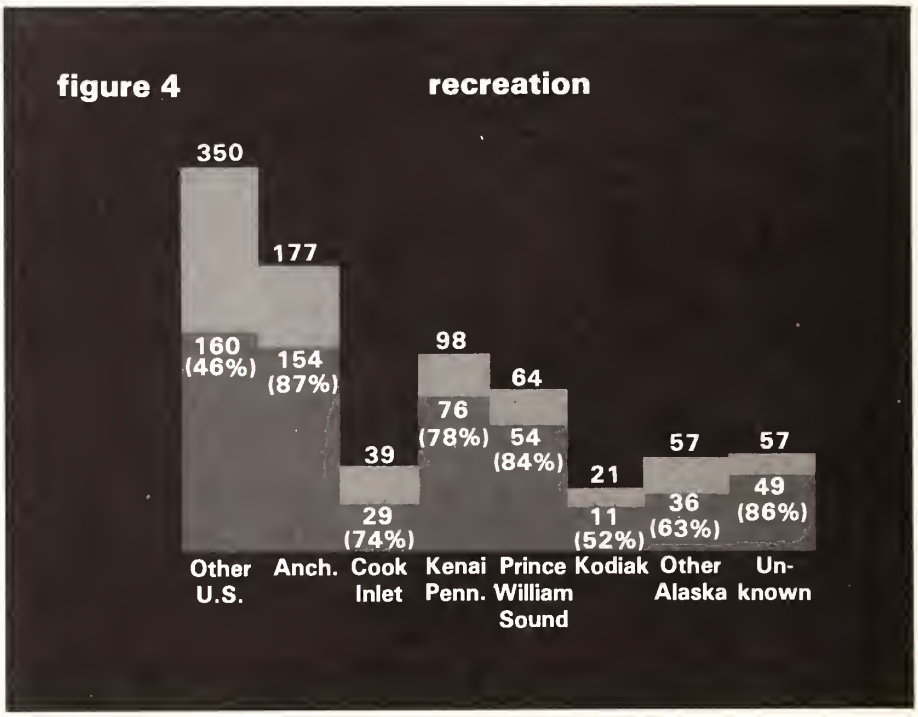
What recreational experiences, values, and activities are most important? What mix of dispersed, primitive recreational opportunities and developed recreational facilities is needed to best meet public preferences? Are there management techniques, such as zoning, permits, or use restrictions which will enhance recreational experiences? Are developed recreation facilities best provided by the private sector? What should be done about heavily congested or often over-used recreational areas, such as the Russian River?

Based on the magnitude of responses addressing this issue, the provision and management of recreational opportunities is important to Alaskan residents who commented. As figure 4 shows, over 50 percent of the people commenting from each geographic region within Alaska addressed recreation-related issues.

Forty-six percent of the respondents from the other 49 states mentioned recreation-related issues and concerns. Nearly 80 percent of Alaskan residents who commented also raised these issues.

It is noteworthy that the protection of primitive recreational opportunities was the only significant recreation-related concern of respondents commenting from outside Alaska. This is reflected by the fact that 83 percent of 160 out of state respondents, who commented on recreation related issues, felt that primitive recreation values could best be protected by wilderness classification.

The opportunity to participate in primitive recreation is also important to Alaskan residents. Twenty percent of the Alaskans who commented on recreation-related issues expressed a desire that primitive recreational values be protected through wilderness classification.



Additional recreation-associated issues addressed by Alaskan residents were:

- Refueling facilities for boats in Prince William Sound were endorsed by 102 respondents. Mooring facilities were endorsed by 97 respondents. A significant proportion of respondents qualified their desire for these facilities indicating that the facilities should be carefully planned or that only a few of them should be provided.

  Development of refueling and mooring facilities could dramatically increase the recreational use of Prince William Sound. Increased use from refueling facilities was perceived as undesirable by 45 respondents. Increased use from mooring facilities was perceived as undesirable by 39 respondents. These respondents generally felt that natural values and primitive, nonmotorized marine recreation would be adversely affected by increased powerboat use of Prince William Sound.

- The provision and management of winter sports activities was determined to be an important concern of Alaskan residents. Although respondents generally acknowledged that snowmobile recreation is a legitimate use on the Chugach National Forest, 30 percent of the public comments from Alaska addressing the recreational issue favored some form of zoning. By providing separate areas for snowmobiles and cross-country skiers, the conflicts between these user groups would be minimized.

  Support for winter sports developments, such as snow play areas and developed ski areas, was not unanimous. Public comments indicated that some level of increased development is desirable.

- Continuation of Forest Service public use cabins was supported by 38 respondents and opposed by one. Recreational residences (authorized by special use permits) were endorsed by 54 people and opposed by 32 people. In addition,

47 respondents desired some form of restrictions (only near existing roads, only with careful landscaping to blend into the natural surroundings, only a very few of them should be allowed, and so forth). These restrictions were proposed to control the development of recreational residences on Chugach National Forest land.

The appeal of Alaska's outdoor recreational opportunities is one of the things which draws people to Alaska. Consequently, the issue of outdoor recreation is an important concern to Alaskan residents. Responses from Alaskans addressing recreation issues is best characterized by a desire for additional recreation opportunities, carefully planned to minimize adverse impacts while enhancing a broad spectrum of developed and dispersed recreational experiences.

wildlife management

What areas on the Chugach National Forest deserve special emphasis for wildlife habitat management? Which land classification and management techniques will best provide for the enhancement of threatened and endangered wildlife species? What is the relative importance of managing wildlife for nonconsumptive uses as well as for sport hunting and trapping purposes? Which management tools (prescribed fire, selective cutting, snag tree retention, and so forth) are most compatible with public preferences and least in conflict with other resource uses?

Wildlife management is an important issue to Alaskans and nonresidents alike, as figure 5 illustrates. The two most important issues appeared to be improving moose habitat and preserving and enhancing wildlife species through the protection of important habitats (including wetlands).

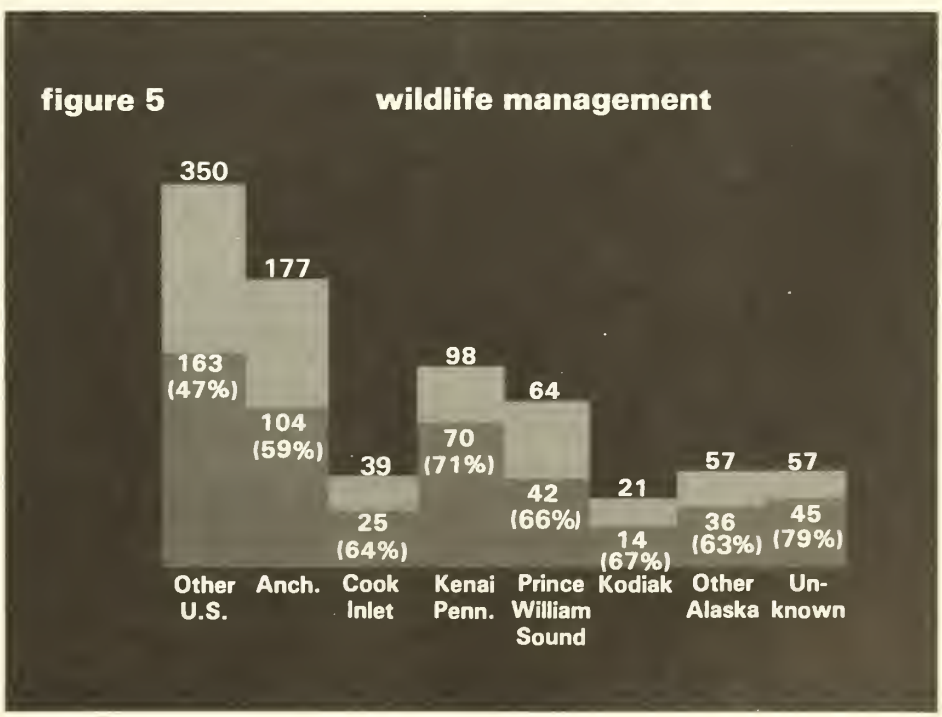
A total of 255 respondents (100 from within Alaska) felt that wilderness classification of individual areas would best protect important wildlife values. Various geographic areas within Prince William Sound (such as Bering River, Copper River Delta, and Knight Island) were most frequently mentioned. The habitats for marine mammals and seabird/shorebird populations were mentioned as habitats that could be protected by wilderness classification of these areas. Brown bear and elk habitat protection on Afognak Island was a concern less frequently mentioned.

Improvement of moose habitat is an important public concern, especially to Alaskans. Eighty-six Alaskans favored moose habitat improvements on the Chugach National Forest. The most prevalent reasons people offered in support of increasing moose populations were to improve hunting opportunities. Nonconsumptive aspects were mentioned as well. Another 28 respondents qualified their endorsement of moose habitat improvements by offering restrictions which they felt should be observed during habitat improvement efforts. Restrictions most often suggested included: do not use prescribed burns, use clearcutting or selective cutting of trees, do not burn or cut in visually sensitive areas, do not undertake habitat improvement projects in close proximity to roads which will increase the chances of accidental road kills, and allow natural fires to create openings for moose browse.

Artificial improvement of moose habitat was opposed by 24 people, because they said it was not needed. Their contention was that nature could be relied upon to do the job.

The resolution of wildlife issues has important implications for sport hunters and the public wildlife viewers as well. Equally important is the management concern about the capability of existing habitat to meet increasing demand. Thus, the issues and management concern require careful consideration in the land management planning process.

figure 5 **wildlife management**



fisheries management

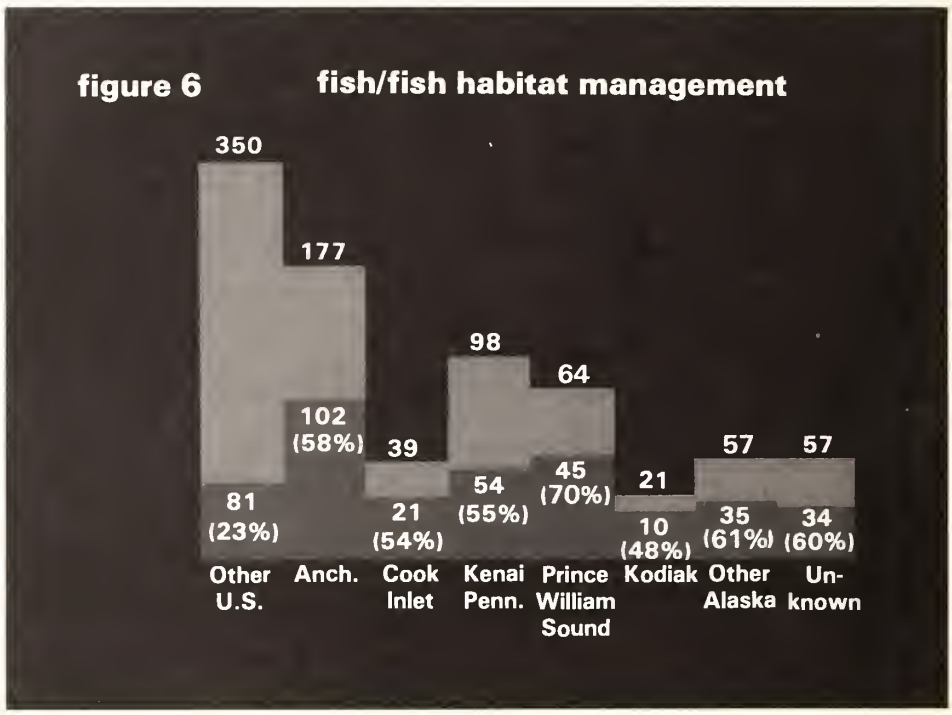
What level of protection and improvement of fisheries habitat is desirable? Where are the best locations to build hatcheries and other aquaculture facilities? Should fisheries management facilities be allowed in wilderness to enhance the fisheries resource, despite possible adverse effects on native stocks or wilderness values?

Construction of aquaculture facilities was favored by 126 respondents. Often, it was unclear to what extent a person meant hatcheries, specifically, when he or she mentioned aquaculture facilities in general.

Unlike some of the other major issues where conflicting public preferences were more significant, fisheries management questions were posed more in terms of what land classifications are most conducive to protection and enhancement of salmon stocks on the Chugach National Forest. Many respondents, both within Alaska and outside, felt that fisheries habitat protection could best be achieved by including important anadromous fish streams in wilderness. Other respondents, including commercial fisheries organizations, felt that nonwilderness status would be most beneficial because it would allow for the construction and maintenance of fisheries research and management facilities.

Thirty-two respondents, including the Chugach Forest Study Group, endorsed an exception to current legislative policy which would allow these facilities in congressionally designated wilderness areas.

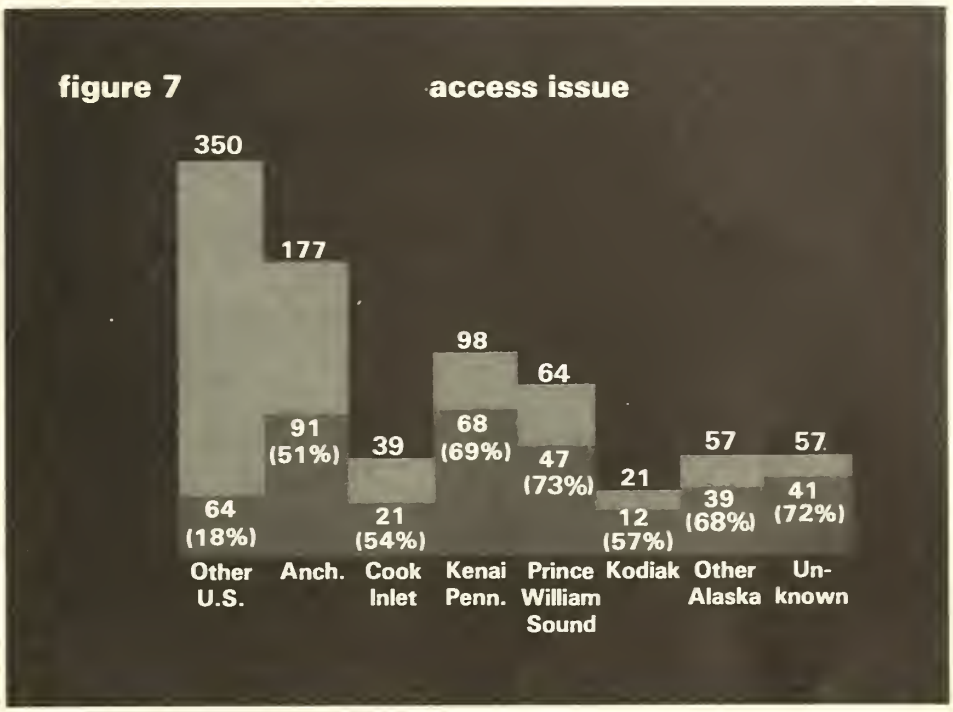
Fisheries management is unquestionably an issue of importance to different segments of the public. Passage of final d-2 legislation may resolve this issue to some degree, but until then additional public involvement will be a very important factor in helping us achieve workable solutions in the final land management plan.



Maintenance of adequate anadromous fisheries stocks is important to both sport and commercial fishing interests. It is also an important management concern. It appears to be an issue of less magnitude to residents outside of Alaska. However, public comments indicate that fisheries management is of significant concern to Alaskan residents, especially those living in Southcentral Alaska. (Figure 6)

access

Where should access be developed or improved on the Chugach National Forest? For what purposes should there be development or improvements (transportation to remote communities, commodity development, or sport fishing and other recreational use)? What kinds of access should be provided? What are their associated positive and negative impacts? Are there areas which should not have trail access? What mix of alternative access development (paved roads, unimproved roads, 4-wheel drive trails, hiking trails, and so forth) provides for the optimum use of national forest commodity and amenity resources?



The issue of access to different areas and for different purposes is important to many people, especially to residents of Southcentral Alaska where access to commodity and amenity resources is often restricted by lack of a well-developed transportation system. Others feel that developing additional access for motorized vehicles will result in further crowding in certain areas and detract from the scenic beauty and solitude. Figure 7 shows the number of people who addressed access issues.

Access issues can be very complex, and public comments reflect that fact. Of all the major issues, it was the one most frequently addressed (215 respondents, 65 from Alaska) in a neutral, value-free context. Many issues relating to access, such as improved access to communities and private land, recreational access, access to coastal areas, access for commodity development, and so on, were often raised in a general, sometimes questioning, sense rather than in pro-con terms.

This caution is further reinforced by the fact that 70 respondents (64 from Alaska) qualified their endorsement of different means of access by offering restrictions to minimize related impacts. Many other people voiced their opinion on a variety of access issues. Seventy-four Alaskan respondents favored improved access to coastal areas for recreation, commodity development, or community access purposes.

A total of 53 other respondents specifically addressed the desirability of improved access to Whittier, either in the form of a road, better railroad service, or through other means. But others opposed it, often because they felt it would result in increased use of Prince William Sound.

Road construction is another controversial issue. Fifty-eight respondents (51 Alaskans) opposed further road development on the Chugach National Forest, and 41 respondents (39 Alaskans) favored it.

Although those access issues were most frequently addressed, other concerns also arose. There were such concerns as the need to maintain access to Native lands once conveyed, the construction of more trails, provision of minimally developed airstrips, and continued helicopter access for recreational skiing. In addition, many respondents communicated their preferences by supporting wilderness or nonwilderness allocation of different geographical areas, which have implications for access development and means of access.

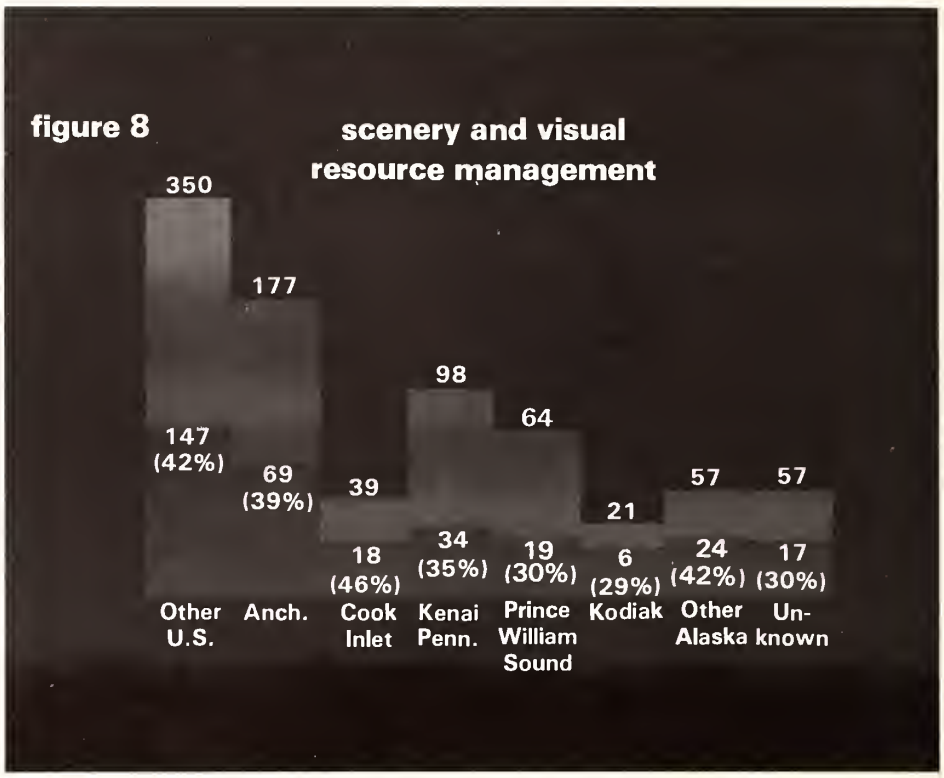
As previously noted, access issues can be very complex. They involve an intricate interrelationship of legal requirements, budget appropriations, impacts on existing and future use patterns, and other variables. For these reasons, access issues must be carefully addressed in the ''Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan,'' not only to guide management activities but to enhance public understanding of access issues.

environmental quality

What level of visual resource management is necessary to protect the scenic and aesthetic resources of the Chugach National Forest? How important are air and water quality considerations in determining developmental levels for commodity resources? Are restrictions on mineral development, timber harvest, recreational development, and other resource use necessary to maintain a quality environment?

Public comments contained discussions of many different topics which, when taken together, indicate considerable public interest in the need for sensitivity toward environmental quality in managing the resources of the Chugach National Forest.

Most prominent among these topics was the expressed importance of scenery and visual resource management. As in other values related to other issues (recreation, wildlife, and so forth), a significant number of respondents addressed the need to protect scenic resources through wilderness classification. A number of respondents also specifically favored a visual resource management program in nonwilderness areas on the Chugach National Forest. Figure 8 depicts the number of respondents addressing scenery and visual resource management by geographic region.



A favorable endorsement by 357 respondents was for protection and management of scenic resources. Opposing this endorsement were 14 respondents who said it would interfere with resource development.

Protection of scenery and other aesthetic considerations were not the only factors addressed in the public comments indicating concern for environmental quality management. Respondents mentioned several other variables which signify the importance of considering environmental quality in forest resource management. Table 2 displays these other variables and the number of respondents who addressed them.

Table 2 — Number of respondents addressing environmental quality issues

Topics Mentioned	Respondents
	Number
Restrictions on timber harvest	
Log debris cleanup	71
Other restrictions (such as no clearcutting, stream bank buffer strips, selective cutting only, etc.).	88
Restrictions on fisheries management (road development only where necessary, etc.).	70
Watershed protection and water quality management	60
Restrictions on minerals and petroleum development (enforce site rehabilitation, do not allow in environmentally sensitive areas, etc.).	60
Soil stability, protect against erosion	39
Restrictions on wildlife management activities (no prescribed burns, not in visually sensitive areas, not near roads, etc.).	28
Facility development (blending with natural surroundings, not too many facilities, etc.).	17
Other environmental concerns (develop resources but protect against environmental damage, allow minimum development — no environmental disruption, etc.).	9
Restrictions on recreational development (such as blend in with natural surroundings, etc.).	5
Air quality protection	3

These comments suggest that the protection of environmental quality is an important management consideration to Alaskans and nonresidents alike.

timber management

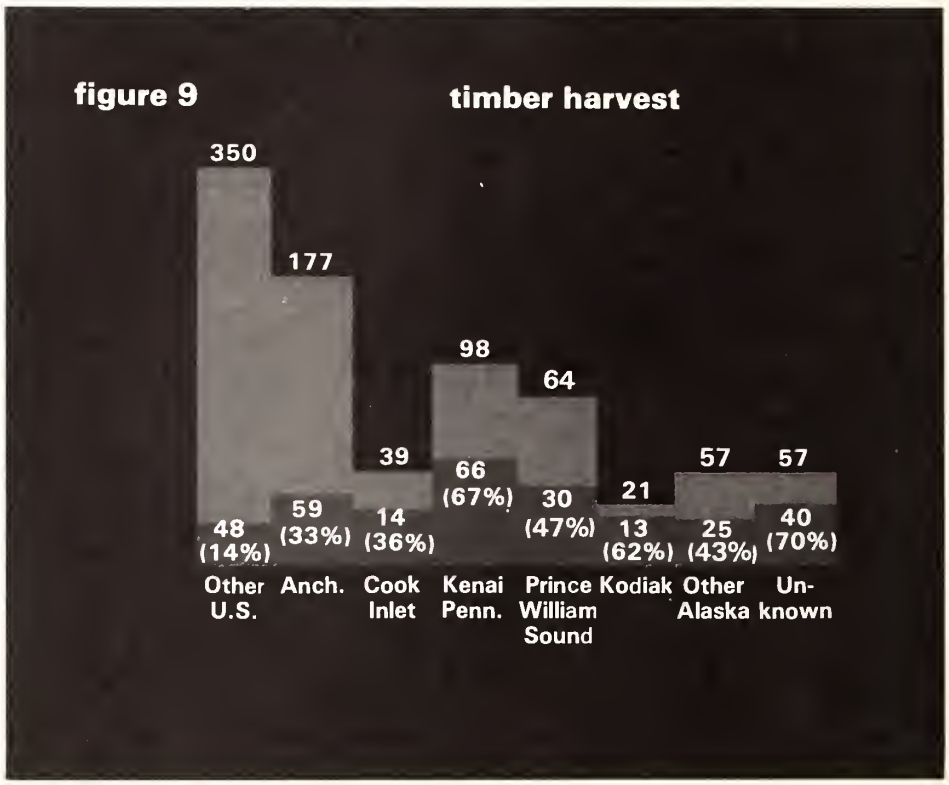
What level and in what locations should timber harvest occur on the Chugach National Forest? Should State and private forest lands be harvested before national forest timber is harvested? Should small, domestic operators be given preference in competing for some timber sales? Should timber harvested from the national forests be marketed to foreign countries? If so, should primary processing be required prior to export? Is the availability of houselogs an important public need?

Commodity development issues received fewer public comments than other issues related to the forest but they still emerged as significant public concerns. As indicated in figure 9, a total of 295 respondents commented on timber-related issues.

Many issues were raised by various respondents from within Alaska and outside. The continuation of timber harvesting on the Chugach National Forest was opposed by 24 respondents and favored by 80. Other related issues were also addressed by respondents, which add important insights about preferences regarding timber issues.

In addition to restrictions on timber harvesting discussed in the previous section, concern over houselogs was addressed by 100 respondents who favored their availability and 7 who opposed cutting of houselogs on the national forests. In addition, 13 respondents felt that houselogs should be limited to private, noncommercial use only. The availability of houselogs is very important to residents of the Kenai Peninsula, Anchorage, and Prince William Sound. Nearly three-fourths of the comments addressing this issue originated from these areas.

Selling timber to foreign markets is another issue of importance in Southcentral Alaska. A total of 43 respondents favored this practice, and 52 opposed it. Nearly two-thirds of the comments again were voiced by residents of the Kenai Peninsula, Anchorage, and Prince William Sound.

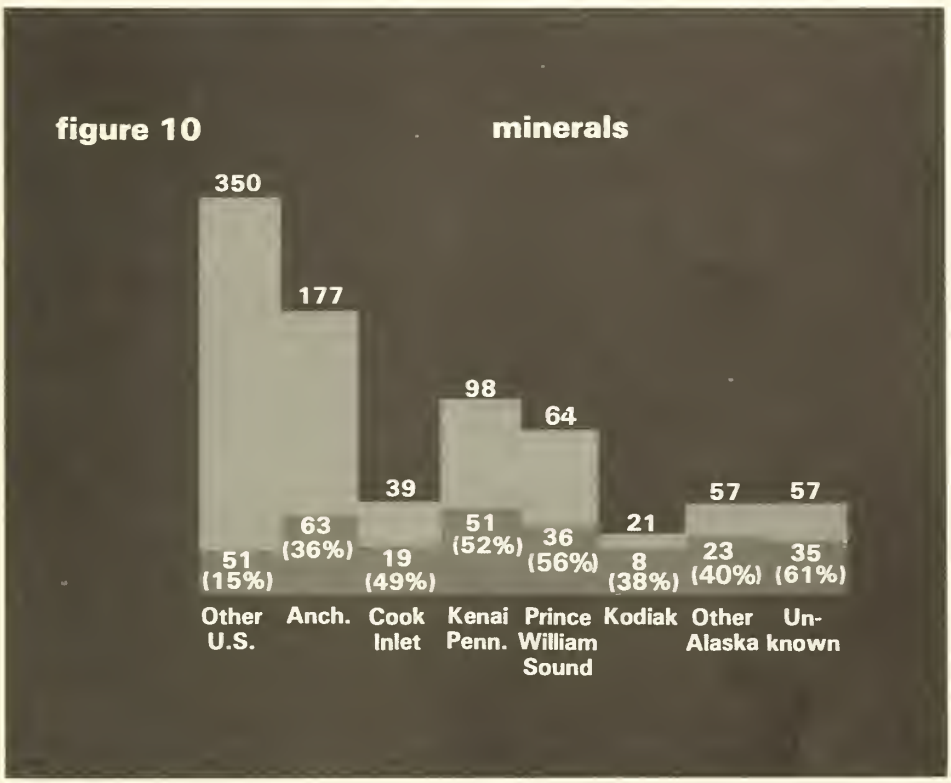


Additional issues related to timber emerged with less frequency. They included the need to require primary processing in Alaska of exported logs, the question of whether to harvest State and private lands prior to Federal lands, and the importance of nonwilderness designation to assure a continual timber supply.

minerals development

Where on the Chugach National Forest should minerals exploration and development take place? What level of management and monitoring should be enforced to ensure that minerals development is conducted in ways compatible with other resource values, including wilderness, wildlife, and recreation?

Minerals exploration and development issues are fairly straightforward as they surfaced in the public response. Basically, respondents either favored minerals exploration and development (often in conjunction with suggested restrictions) or they opposed it altogether. Figure 10 displays the number of people who addressed minerals issues by geographic region.



The continuation of minerals exploration and development was supported by 114 respondents. Reasons offered in support of these preferences included the need to develop mineral resources to ensure national self-sufficiency and the importance of minerals development on employment and the economy. In addition, 17 respondents favored nonwilderness for one or more RARE II areas specifically so that minerals exploration and development could be allowed.

Twenty-six respondents (24 from Alaska) opposed further minerals exploration and development, mostly because of adverse environmental consequences perceived to result from mining activities.

As noted in the discussion of the environmental quality issue, restrictions on mineral exploration and development were supported by 60 respondents. These respondents generally felt that further mineral activities were acceptable only within carefully designed and supervised environmental safeguards, such as site rehabilitation or only where it does not conflict with other resource values, such as recreation, wildlife, or wilderness.

other issues

The previous eight issues were raised by a sufficient number of individuals and formal groups to warrant definition as major public issues to be addressed by the "Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan." All of the other above issues were addressed by several individuals and formal groups, ranging from 33 percent of the respondents who discussed the minerals issues to 75 percent of the respondents who addressed the wilderness issues.

But, public comments contained a number of other concerns which were raised with less frequency than those which constitute major issues. The following other issues show the breadth of topics which emerged in public comments. We feel it is important to be responsive, where possible, to all issues in the land management planning process.

Cultural Resources — The Chugach National Forest contains many important cultural, archeological, and historical sites which merit protection and interpretation. Final conveyance of Native claims will be an important consideration in the final resolution of this issue.

Employment/Economy — Although economic considerations were no doubt implicit in the minds of respondents when they addressed resource development issues, enough responses specifically noted employment and economic issues to suggest that in localized areas, such as Seward, these are important concerns.

Utility Corridors and Facilities — A number of respondents addressed the need to provide future utility corridors and facilities. Some people favored them, some opposed them, and others merely indicated that it was an issue which should be considered in the land management plan.

Quality of Life/Lifestyles — A small number of respondents addressed "Alaska lifestyles" (including subsistence hunting, fishing, and facilities) as needing particular attention in the Forest Service planning process.

Fire Management — Wildfire control and the use of prescribed burns management tools was an issue raised by Alaskans and non-Alaskans.

Multiple Use — A number of respondents specifically mentioned that they favored continuation of multiple-use management on the Chugach National Forest. It was apparent from the context of many of the responses which addressed this issue that, to many people, multiple use means nonwilderness, but to others it includes wilderness.

Public Involvement — Many respondents addressed the issue of Forest Service public involvement. Some said that they felt public involvement efforts needed dramatic improvement, and others thanked the agency for allowing them to comment and requested to be kept informed of land management planning activities on the Chugach National Forest.

conclusions

As mentioned in the introduction, the major issues which have been identified by this analysis will be used in developing the next steps in the planning process. The next steps are:

- Formulate a range of land management alternatives (each major issue will be addressed in an alternative).
- Analyze the effects of each alternative.
- Publish a draft environmental statement for public review and comment.
- Publish a final environmental statement and land management plan.

We look forward to your participation in development of the "Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan." If you have questions or would like to know about the plan's progress, please contact the Chugach Planning Group by writing to USDA Forest Service, Chugach National Forest, Pouch 6606, Anchorage, Alaska 99502.

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